
Ancient discussions of literary theory and history relied heavily on descriptive adjectives, many of which spring to mind in response to K’s new edition with translation, introduction, and commentary of the DGR: foremost among them elegans, copiosus, laboriosus, and above all, doctus. It is long since time that this Suetonian text, one of very few sources of information about our ancient counterparts, the grammarians, and a chief witness to the lives of the republican and early imperial rhetoricians, received detailed treatment. K’s edition combines three separate but related aims: to provide an introduction, suitable for the general reader but with detailed technical information made available in footnotes, to Suetonius’ life, working methods, and the character of the DGR; a new text and translation; and a full commentary, intended for the specialized reader, and focusing primarily on the careers and scholarship of the individuals whose lives Suetonius reports, as well as on Suetonius’ own scholarly habits. As he did in his 1988 Guardians of language, K has taken an apparently unrewarding topic (‘grammar,’ after all, as one reviewer remarked recently in these pages, ‘is—grammar’: and grammarians are grammarians) and shown it to be full of riches.

1H accepts the premises on which “influence” rests, but not “intertextuality,” though technically the latter does include the former. See Peter J. Rabinowitz, “Audience’s Experience of Literary Borrowing,” in S. Suleiman ed. The Reader in the Text (Princeton 1980) 242. Intertextuality implies indeterminate ambiguity, non-identity of interpretation and authorial intention, the play of language, narrative as a construct that exists independently of reality, etc. For the difference between “influence” and “intertextuality,” see H.R. Elam s.v. “Intertextuality,” The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics (Princeton 1993). H posits the existence of authorial intention (29), and limits intertextual relations to intentional borrowings, silent corrections, etc. (esp. 54-72).

2K’s 1992 monograph, Studies on the text of Suetonius ‘De grammaticis et rhetoribus’, discusses his text: I will not treat that area in this review, though I will mention—because they are buried in an appendix—two convincing proposals in the text of a scholium to Juv. 1.20 (341) and Macrobius 1.15.21-2 (343).

3J.E.G. Zetzel on V. Law, BMCR 6.7 (1995) 634.
The very project of writing about teacher-scholars was novel, and K shows that as a consequence the DGR was primarily a product of original research. Suetonius was himself a scholasticus and a man of public standing, secretary a studiiis, a bibliothecis and ab epistulis; it was in his lifetime that professional grammatici and rhetores ‘acquired a clearly articulated and acknowledged place at the centre of the élite culture more generally’ (xxix). Like Nepos before him, Suetonius had an eye for a gap in the market, and included in his De uiris illustribus memorable past exponents of these newly respectable, even influential, professions. K’s interest in the socio-cultural milieu of Suetonius’ subjects and their patrons informs both the introduction and the commentary, where he combines the techniques of prosopography and historical analysis to provide a mine of useful information, including valuable notes throughout on cognomina, the patronage system, and the treatment, education, and manumission of slaves; specific topics include historiographical works written by freedmen (300-1), praecones (74-5), the relationships of the late-republican Claudii Pulchri (143-5), the relative value of ancient sums of money (84, 127-8), gout (79-80), apparitores (130), and the corniculum (131). A second focus is on Suetonius’ own working methods: K examines his critical and scholarly language (illustrated with abundant parallels from the Lives of the emperors), methods of reasoning and deduction, and sources of information. There being no earlier biographies of these figures to draw on, Suetonius gathered his information by excerpting primary sources, often accumulating data on the grammatici while reading through biographies of poets, orators, etc. for his lives of other categories of uiri illustres (for the rhetores there were some sources—though K argues, plausibly [App. 4], that Suetonius used the Elder Seneca’s collection of reminiscences only at second hand). The third major strand of the commentary focuses on the works of scholarship produced by the subjects of the DGR and on the general history of ancient grammatical and rhetorical education and practice. These K documents with comprehensive expertise; again, I single out only a few of my favorite notes: on the spuria attributed to Probus (247-8), on Orbilius’ interest in synonyms (129), on authors considered ‘ancient’ in the late first century CE (256-9), on Greek titles for Latin prose works (133), and on the different types of controversiae (289-90). Though K claims not to treat stylistic matters as a general rule (vii), he makes very sharp remarks concerning the poems that Suetonius quotes (e.g. 153 on legit and facit in FLP Furius Bibaculus fr. 6, and 189-90 on nutricula in FLP Domitius Marsus fr. 3).

There are a very few times when K’s care and precision defeat themselves: for instance, the commentary style being less well adapted to extended discussion, I found his long note (86-93) on the terms grammaticus, litteratus, litterator (etc.) quite hard to follow—footnotes would have made the technical information easier to separate from the main text. In general, however, the commentary provokes questions rather than invites corrections. E.g., on poor teachers: though K mentions ‘the topos of poverty’ (158), is it not possible that the very fact there was such a topos accounts for the contradiction between Orbilius’ poverty (9.2) and the reports of his apparent wealth (132)? Are teachers conventionally poor? Similarly, the food that Valerius Cato eats in his poverty

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(11.3)—part of a ‘ludicrous series’ of items ‘in which the numbers are chosen with farcical precision’ (157)—must be conventional of poverty, like Horace’s satirical leeks. On Verrius Flaccus (190-1) K does not mention his possible involvement with a possible Augustan compilation of the Annales maximi; on Bibaculus’ description of Orbilius as litterarum obliuio (9.6), K is surely right to see a reversal of the proper teacher’s job, i.e. to preserve the memoria litterarum (136): but I wonder if there is any mileage in connecting it with the nickname given to the Augustan scholar at Alexandria, Didymus Bibliolathas, who wrote so many books that he forgot what he himself had said (perhaps not—it is rejected by Courtney, FLP p.194—but the similarity is striking). Suetonius’ description of the late arrival of grammar and rhetoric (2.1 studium grammaticae in urbem intulit Crates Mallotes ... 25.1 rhetorica quoque ... sero recepta est), which uses the language of immigration and assimilation, reminds me of Livy’s descriptions of the arrival of foreigners and foreign influences into Rome—beginning, of course, in the Preface, with avaritia luxuriaque, which came serae in ciuitatem (§II). Not all the immigrants were unwelcome, of course, and the story of assimilation is the story of Rome’s growth, but it is interesting that ancient Roman scholarship, too, saw itself as taking in foreign influences. Some things I would like to know more about: the game of writing replies to famous speeches of the past (328); Suetonius’ habits when recording variants, e.g. at 4.3 sunt qui (where I do not see the inconsistency that K does; some formulae are listed in Intro. n.18); Pompey’s intellectual background and connections (276, 298); and ancient jokebooks (220-1: isn’t one ascribed to Tacitus [Teuffel5 §339.2]?).

The fluid, literate translation manages to be both idiomatic and to follow the word order of the Latin; very occasionally I thought K was too expansive (e.g. 1.1 grammatica, 18.1 pergola), and in the famous anecdote about Porcellus and Tiberius, mentitur Capito would be better translated ‘Capito’s flattering you’ than ‘Capito’s lying’ (cf. OLD mentior 2, TLL I.B.5: I owe this point to Roland Mayer). The index is the only part of the book in which I was disappointed: though full (and full of surprises—who would expect oral sex to figure in a treatise on Latin grammar? but see p. 242), it could be much fuller (and more accurate). Worse, it has some annoying quirks and inconsistencies. Gaul is found s.v. ‘Gallia,’ but Spain under ‘Spain’; we are referred from ‘Cicero’ to ‘Tullius Cicero, M.’—but no quarter is given to those of us who cannot remember Cinna’s nomen (Helvius), or that of C. Melissus, Mæcenas’ freedman; and heaven help the non-expert who is looking for Alexander Polyhistor (s.v. ‘Cornelius’). Many items from the rich commentary have been left out, (especially, it seems, topics of ancient research: e.g., myotacism, 216; naturalization of words, 227; paradoxography, 191 and 210), and it would be helpful to have some entries further analysed (esp. ‘Suetonius—method of’ and ‘nomenclature’). Finally, of the handful (literally) of typographical errors outside the Index, only one might affect the reader adversely: for ‘cf. 23.3n.’ on p.186 sed ita ... nemini read ‘cf. 24.3n.’

But these really are quibbles. This is, quite simply, a marvellous book.